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10.1017/mag.2024.89 © The Authors, 2024 NICK LORD

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Nick Lord : An appreciation

Nick Lord, who died after a short illness on 1st March 2024, was both a fine mathematician and a first-rate teacher. These qualities are not always combined, but Nick believed that there was no point in doing mathematics if you could not communicate your ideas enthusiastically to other people, and, in particular, to school pupils. His belief was reinforced by an excellent series of Teaching Notes in *The Mathematical Gazette*, whose objective was to suggest ways to bring depth and enthusiasm into the ordinary mathematics syllabus.

Part of this involved exploring connections between different aspects of the subject. If you look at his three contributions in the Teaching Notes to the March 2024 issue of the *Gazette*, you will see how he achieves this. The first takes the form of a imaginary dialogue between the author and a "Devil's Advocate" as to the reasons why you might be interested in high-order approximations to irrational numbers such as $\sqrt{2}$. The second is a cautionary tale about polar coordinates and the need to be careful about ambiguous endpoints of a curve. The third, inspired by plenary talk at MA Conference, discusses problem-solving strategies and the unexpected occurrence of the golden ratio in an unlikely context. The fecundity of ideas explored in these three short pieces is absolutely typical of the way Nick thought mathematics should be communicated.

Nick also contributed many longer pieces to the *Gazette* which went beyond the level of school mathematics, but these are also remarkable for his insistence in communicating ideas elegantly. Their subjects range from abstract algebra to analysis and from geometrical inequalities to number theory. He will be particularly remembered for his 20 years in charge of the Problem Corner, during which time he supervised the selection of some 250 tantalising challenges for readers of the journal to tackle. These covered topics from combinatorics, conics and constructions to polynomials, probability and packing. His comments on the solutions were both rigorous and imaginative, and he was always keen to emphasise that a published solution is never the final word – there is always something new and unexpected to develop.

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In tribute to his work as the PC Editor, Nick was presented with a plaque. Fortunately it was possible to do this at his bedside and he clearly appreciated receiving it.

He was also on the Council of the MA between 2002 and 2008.

Nick was also involved for many years with the UK Mathematics Trust. He was a regular marker for the Intermediate Olympiad, and his experience and ingenuity in problem-solving allowed him to assess unusual scripts and ensure that they were given adequate reward. His help and support for new markers was evident. He was also on the Publications Committee of the UKMT and contributed significantly to the revision of some of the earlier books as well as the assessment of the most recent title which was a Mathematical Olympiad primer.

Nick was educated at Yateley Comprehensive School, from where he won an Open scholarship to read mathematics at Hertford College, Oxford. He was second in the Finals examination, receiving a Junior Mathematics Prize. Nick studied for a DPhil but sadly did not complete as the results that were to form the bulk of his thesis were discovered to have already been published in an Eastern European journal in Russian. He contemplated some more time on the DPhil trying to work on other areas but financial pressures led to him seeking a job in teaching. Tonbridge School was the very fortunate recipient, where he was soon promoted to Head of Department, a role which he fulfilled with great distinction for fourteen years in two separate spells.

He was a beloved tutor in a boarding house for many years and it was a reassuringly familiar sight in the summer to see him standing as umpire on the Lower Fields with his wide-brimmed hat and clipboard. He was also involved in Athena, Chess and the Duke of Edinburgh Award, as well as being a regular supporter of School Music and Chapel. Nick loved his life at Tonbridge and took enormous pride in the progress and achievements of his pupils both during their time here and in their lives far beyond the School.

There was a Memorial Service held at 4 pm on Tuesday 7th May in the Chapel of Tonbridge School. It was very well attended by pupils, Tonbridge colleagues and by other individuals from the MA and elsewhere. The Service included a welcome by James Priory, Headmaster; a family tribute by Nick's brother Stephen; a tribute by Ian Jackson, friend and colleague; as well as other readings.

His untimely death has left huge gaps in the organisations he was involved in, and he will be sorely missed by everyone who knew or worked with him.

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